

## REASONS FOR SIGNING A BNSP

1. Because alternative is to refuse to sign it. The issue is not whether to go through the process of developing a BNSP in this Administration (that has gone on, intermittently, for two years) or even, whether to update such a policy paper this year. The staffwork, thinking, phrasing, coordinating and interacting, lies behind. The iterative process has converged about as closely as it is useful to attempt: the remaining issues, of policy, of wording and emphasis, are fairly well defined and an acceptable State/OSD/ (i.e., civilian policy level staff) ~~NSC~~ NSC/position arrived at. It is true that the process up to this point has achieved most of the benefits of this iterative process, in terms of informing all parties to the interaction of their varying points of view; the JSCP has been entirely recast, ~~in~~ as compared to JSCP '62, along the lines of the successive BNSP drafts, along with directives like the NSTAP. So much has been accomplished without actually signing any of the drafts: what is to be gained by signing this one?

Naively, one might counter with the question: What is to be lost? I gather that the answers to that might be: a) With matters of this importance, the President and SecDEF must personally immerse themselves in the issues, spend time at problem before identifying themselves with these expressions of policy; this effort is not a good use of their time, considering alternative uses; ~~xxxxxxx~~ b) Words can be leaked, cited out of context, misinterpreted, used as political weapons against Administration (as earlier, with "Rostow ne-win policy": true of any classified or public utterances, but "not worth it" here); c) subordinates, e.g., military planners, will take words as setting limits to their preparations, prepare only for certain specified contingencies, objectives; then, when others arise, and when Admin changes its



2.

mind, they will find plans and preparations "set in concrete," their freedom of action foreclosed; ~~simply~~ d) a BNSP specific enough to influence behavior predictably will reduce flexibility; satisfy military in their desire for a "field manual" in which they can look up policies in every case, rather than encouraging them to be on the qui vive for changes or nuances in policy, reading speeches closely, etc.; encourage them to ponder wording, develop legal skills, casuistry, reference to precedent; e) will be used by military to hamper changes in policy by Administration; will be cited as precedent, not to be changed without going through the official machinery; f) Will narrow expectations of military, reduce uncertainties both of contingency and policy excessively, lead to inflexible preparations, no insurance/reserves, ; g) false or misleading to suggest that government "has" a policy on every conceivable issue; desired behavior simply cannot be prescribed in every area at a given moment, future Administration decisions cannot be predicted in every contingency: dishonest, unuseful, deleterious and dangerous to suggest otherwise. ~~xxxx~~ (h) If some of these costs or dangers are minimized by making wording vague, ambiguous, general, or by describing a spectrum of alternative desired courses in given contingencies or multiple contingencies, policy ceases to have operational significance.

But: many of these costs/risks appear large only because one implicitly imagines a BNSP and a policy process similar to that of the last Administration; 1) a process characterized by great investiture of authority in the procedures, the ~~xxxx~~ coordination, the machinery and the resulting "agreed" paper; emphasis on ~~xxxx~~ unanimity in final expression; paper representing process, expressing concordance, rather than expressing personal, transient, Presidential (or SecDef, SecState) views; hence, any changes called for lengthy process; (2) Once policy enunciated, machinery took over with minimum intervention from



3.

highest level policy-makers; little feedback to them (JSCP, plans not even submitted); hence, apparent need to make guidance comprehensive, sufficient, precise; while, contrary pressure, because of emphasis on unanimity and process, to arrive at vague, very spotty, formulations (result: though this was in effect the only guidance to plans, it represented very little guidance to plans: which was why JCS liked old form); given small desire of SecDef or Pres to intervene, small desire of JCS to reveal disagreement to SecDef or encourage his intervention, any uncertainty over policy took form of ~~minute~~ scanning BNSP minutely and making briefs based on changes in wording, interpretation, precedent: argument by conflicting advocates, but without a judge.

3) The content of the policy (including NSTAP) came to be deliberately contrived to reduce flexibility, uncertainty of policy, alternative contingency planning (with its possibly expansionist effect on budget requests): no planning for limited war in Europe, limited war with the Soviets, conventional war with the Soviets, possible delay in introducing nuclears in Europe, in ~~limited~~ war with the Soviets; possible delay in hitting cities, governmental centers in war with Soviet Union; possible withholding of ready reserve forces in GW; no alternative targeting minimizing or increasing collateral damage; in general, depreciation of need for planning for conventional weapons in moderate-sized operations (e.g., for Quemoy, prior to 1958); no distinction between SU and China; in summary, ~~no~~ depreciation for need for flexibility, alternative planning for given contingency (allowing different policy decisions, depending on precise context, experience, expectations, values at the time); tendency for "definitive policy," i.e., precise, singled-valued predictions of Presidential decisions in future situations.



4.

But: current policy expands alternatives: from those specified earlier, and from those likely to be imagined by military otherwise. Signing it will release energies otherwise devoted to: 1) trying to change it, in short-run; 2) trying to narrow alternatives (get license to devote all attention to one, preferred alternative; rule out contingencies or objectives that would ~~xxx~~ give basis for budget requests by opposing units); 3) "fighting the problem."

Contrast current SIOP '64 guidance with SIOP '62 guidance; latter adjured planners to ignore alternatives, <sup>ve</sup> develop one plan; former specifies alternatives, although only a few. Because there are only a few alternatives currently for general war, does that indicate that current SIOP guidance is, on balance, restrictive? Would there be as many as there <sup>are</sup> without this policy directive, and without its being as specific as it is?

(It can be argued that even SIOP '62 gave President more choice than he had previously, with its few provisions for constraints, withholding; prior situation with unintegrated planning really allowed no consistent, predictable choice at all).

The way to get a real range of alternatives at the moment of decision is not to keep subordinates thoroughly uncertain as to what your choice may be. Their response to this uncertainty is not likely to be an imaginative effort to foresee a range of possible choices in a variety of contingencies and to develop, economically, flexible and complementary plans and preparations to cover these situations. Rather, it is likely that individual subordinates will each make relatively single-valued "assumptions" about the "important," contingencies, the "likely" (or desired--by subordinate) high-level decision ("He'll have to do this--if he can't do anything else"), resulting not only in inflexible preparations at the unit level, but in uncoordinated preparations, offering very low efficiency in dealing even with one, given policy in one contingency (even SIOP-62-type guidance can be preferable to this, in short-run: though alternative may preserve resources for flexible response in longer-run).(at the cost of total incoherence, paralysis in short-run).



5.

Thus, to refuse to sign BNSP is to preserve, encourage, increase, uncertainty as to Presidential objectives, preferences, desires, expectations, and future contingency decisions. ~~The~~ To imagine that this will enhance his freedom of action at a future ~~ix~~ date is to ~~be~~ be very unrealistic about the behavior of very large bureaucracies. WHEN A CRISIS ARISES, THE PRESIDENT WILL HAVE THE RANGE OF PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVES, THE FREEDOM OF ACTION, THAT SUBORDINATE UNITS HAVE DESIGNED AND BOUGHT FOR HIM EARLIER. Deliberately-preserved uncertainty will have led them to make preparations (plans, deployment, weapon configuration, etc.) and to fail to make others, in ways that virtually preclude certain strategic or tactical choices, and perhaps preclude the achievement of certain objectives: all this, in an essentially uncontrolled and predicted manner (unless prior effort was made to forecast and monitor the very complex organizational behavior resulting from the lack of authoritative policy).

Speeches and scattered directives do not substitute for the BNSP, in reducing uncertainties as desired (and inducing uncertainty where and to the extent desired). They are rhetorical; designed primarily for different audiences, including segments of the U.S. population, various Allies, neutrals and enemies. Speech-writers can scarcely deal with the responsibility of knowing that their words will be scrutinised by commanders and war planners and may serve as basis for changes in plans or basic anticipations. Speeches, even press conference remarks, are often deliberately ambiguous or incomplete, concerning matters which it is not intended to veil from military commanders and staff; yet this can and does convey an impression of shifts in emphasis or perhaps basic policy to military readers. Should this tendency to use speeches as the basis for conclusions as to new policy, rather than for conjectures, to be checked by direct inquiry or new directives, be encouraged? The problem is not that military staff fail to read the papers or to be interested in "national security gossip." What is needed is rather more of a damper on the process of reinterpreting national policy, in terms of wishes and fears.



5.

The adequacy of speeches as guides to policy, and press conferences, etc. is indicated by the interpretations placed on them by such readers as Kissinger, Brodie and de Gaulle. In most cases, their interpretations, when wrong, could be defended on the basis of the texts. (Military readers will also have access to directives, etc; but newspaper accounts may have advantage of being current; and given staff propensity to expect that the line has changed since the last directive (either in a fear or desired manner) these speeches, with all their ambiguities, etc., may really be taken as more authoritative, or scarcely less authoritative. This influence will not be eliminated if the BNSP is signed, but it may be damped.

At this point, Administration cannot ~~xxx~~ effectively be "silent" concerning the BNSP. A claim that "We don't believe in having one at all" is unconvincing after this prolonged effort. ~~It~~ A refusal to sign this draft will be interpreted as a signal in itself, in ways that are not entirely predictable or controllable but which have some foreseeable undesirable aspects. It will sustain or increase uncertainty about future policies, and certain of these are of peculiar interest to the readers. It will appear to reveal unwillingness to commit oneself to those aspects of the current draft which serve to reassure certain readers: e.g., to the possibility of using tactical nuclear weapons if necessary, implicitly ruling out a "no first use" policy, no withdrawal from Europe in short run or without consultation. Hence, energies will be bound up in various insurance and resistance efforts. It will support hopes and, more likely, fears that the present wording does not represent "real" views, or the real views of the President and SecDef, or differences of opinion within the Administration: e.g., as to the limits of conventional capability that are needed, or as to the minimum strategic capability needed, or as to the acceptability of regimes in Cuba, commitments to Allies, etc.



6.

It ~~can~~ is true that the JSCP '63 and '64 have been very responsive to the draft BNSP's, so that one does not have motive of signing the BNSP just to influence them. However, this profess is not irreversible. Presumably, the wording of the current plans was accepted tentatively, on the assumption that the drafts did represent Administration (including Presidential) policy. It can be taken for granted that this view was not shared by all parties to the planning: particularly those below the JCS level who lacked face-to-face contact with high Administration officials. Those who so successfully developed the understanding of Administration wishes represented in these plans were, in effect, making bets that this interpretation would be supported by eventual endorsement of the BNSP. Failure or refusal to provide this endorsement can only undermine the position of these planners, and strengthen not only their critics but the alleged bases for the criticism.

Who the problem  
of subordinate  
commanders

Even if draft BNSP is accepted as representing current Administration thinking, refusal to sign it will generate uncertainty as to the stability of these views; this would be desirable if it really promoted imagination as to likely changes and focussed on those parts most likely to change; but actually, wishes and fears for change will have a great influence on the actual expectations, and efforts to promote desired change will be encouraged, or insure against, resist, or commit one's resources to preclude undesired change.

Three-star general: "As long as there isn't a definite BNSP, I figure we have a lot of leeway to interpret statements ((read: we can't be crucified for what may be "idiosyncratic" interpretations), and to press our own views." ~~xxxx~~ How would signing it actually change your own behavior? "Then I would say: I still disagree with you, but since that's what you want, I'll support it."



8.

a) There must be guidance for war plans, yearly. Instrument for controlling anticipations, preparations, planning of all those subordinates who do not have access to face-to-face contact with Administration. Note also that even high-level plans are not really monitored by civilians. Therefore, to rely entirely on military distillation, interpretation of scattered pronouncements is to ~~be~~ forego much control.

Might rely on military initiative: let them submit draft BNSP, or even draft war plans; let civilians comment on it. Modification: have BNSP signed by SecDef only, for military use (might reduce scope somewhat: fewer pronouncements not called for by war planning). (Could still be reviewed by State, NSC; spare President). Don't pretend to ~~bind~~ bind civilians (State); basis for planning.

True that NSTAP (other directives?) have had major effect; but that leaves other areas still covered only by BNSP.

Release energies, for support, implementation.

Expand alternatives.

Support Administration sympathisers.

Reduce undesirably uncertainty ~~(which)~~

Explicitly induce uncertainty ~~in~~ in specific areas, presenting explicit alternative policies to be supported.

*In any event, get military sections endorsed. They are the crucial part*



Emphasis on detailed control centralized in White House:

1. DoesN't President trust his military commanders?      broad, mission-type  
No. (I.e., he doesn't trust to interpret or follow/orders as he would wish).
  - a) Feeling that they do not understand possibility or consequences of escalation.
  - b) Feeling that they are willing to take very considerable risks--which they may underestimate--to achieve certain specific objectives on which they have long been focussed: e.g., Cuba; China.
  - c) Feeling that some of them are anxious to use at least a few nuclear weapons, to "break the ice," to establish a precedent, to convince Soviets we are willing, but even more, to convince Administration that nuclear are to be expected in subsequent conflict (and if use is effective: to convince Administration that nuclears are desirable). (WHEN ONE SIDE USES--THOSE ON OTHER SIDE ARGUING AGAINST INITIATING NEXT
  - d) Belief that military do not understand or sympathize with reasons for maintaining barrier between nuclear and conventional weapons.
  - e) Belief that military have not thought through consequences of general nuclear war, are much too casual about "accepting" its consequences. Among other things, they have not thought through consequences for Europe.  
(TIME WILL BE FATALLY WEAKENED: LIKEWISE, NEXT TIME THAT SAME SIDE CONTEMPLATES INITIATING CONFLICT (PROBABILITY THAT NUCLEARS WILL BE USED IN RESPONSE WILL HAVE GONE UP).
  - f) Belief that military are not "serious" about anything except "force requirements" and perhaps declaratory policy; not about objectives or conduct of actual fighting (except perhaps Marine Corps; and Special Forces, etc.)
  - g) Feeling that military do not trust President (hence, likelihood of their attempting to get him, or U.S. committed; achieve their limited objectives;

Evidence:

- 1) JCS record on nuclears vs. conventional (see Quemoy; Attitude on tac nucs, control, use, reliance, sharing with allies,
2. jcs planning for general war: the ~~STOP~~ Optimum-mix.
3. Lack of JCS mention or evident worry about escalation; use of nuclears; effects in Europe; outcome of general war; methods of terminating general war; C&C problems other than spasm;
4. JCS talk of "accepting" general war; (note calculations in JSCP);
5. Views on testing, arms race
6. JCS attitudes on nuclear diffusion, sharing with Allies.

A: Importance of having military commanders President trusts: educating current ones; but mainly, getting new ones (note Eisenhower example).

B: Can anticipate that question of using nuclears, and ~~use~~ initial uses



2. Need for centralized control at White House: even if President fully trusted military commanders.

- a) Political inputs during crisis and limited war.
- b) Wide variety of intelligence inputs.
- c) Interaction with Allies.
- d) Interaction with enemy (letters, negotiations,
- e) Possible inputs from Congress, U.S. public.
- f) Extreme uncertainties of inputs: President wants to resolve personally.
- g) Consideration of relative importance, relevance, credibility of inputs from widely different sources; President wants to decide personally.
- h) Interpretation of highest National goals pertinent to major interactions with Allies and enemy, in settling crisis, making demands or concessions in crisis or limited war, terminating limited or general war; President must decide personally.
- i) Some inputs are "Administration-private" (not revealed to JCS? during small limited war or crisis).
- j) Determination of "acceptable risks" (given estimation of probabilities): President wishes to determine personally.
- k)

But: 1) Is President preparing himself properly, adequately, for such operations?  
2) Is White House equipped to be a command center?  
3) Are political, diplomatic inputs being handled in such a way as to be usable in same time frame as military inputs?



USAF off.

So, permit me initially to outline the basic elements of the new U.S. national security policy as we in the Air Force see it. I feel constrained to add the caveat "as we in the Air Force see it," since there is no approved document now in being which sets forth our Basic National Security Policy. Instead, we are advised to find current national military policy guidance from speeches and policy statements, both classified and unclassified, of the President and members of his Cabinet.

This arrangement offers a wide degree of license. However, I hasten to assure you that the version I will present is based on an intensive and continuous research of all available sources and I offer it as a truly objective statement of the new strategy.

((Note: main reason for process has been served: JSCP, at least, is in accordance. But, secondary benefits from signing it:....

But note Brodie/Kissinger/de Gaulle interpretations; these can be supported by public statements. But not by BNSP//.if that were signed. So long as it is not signed, same views are "available" to sub-JCS...whose impression is inevitably based on more evidence than face-to-face contact with McNamara: e.g., on Brodie/Kissinger articles.



Draft memo and underlying notes  
from DE to Helputre in 1963,  
urging him to encourage Pres. JFK  
to issue a BNSP (I had drafted  
the DOO version in '61, Rosten wrote  
a long one in '62, which I modified)

(JFK never did;

probably, Nixon reversed the  
Franklin practice; When Schlesinger  
announced a "no policy" — actually  
corresponding to one I drafted in ~~1961~~  
1961 ("no-cities option"), he may have  
been alluding to issuance of a Presidential  
BNSP.